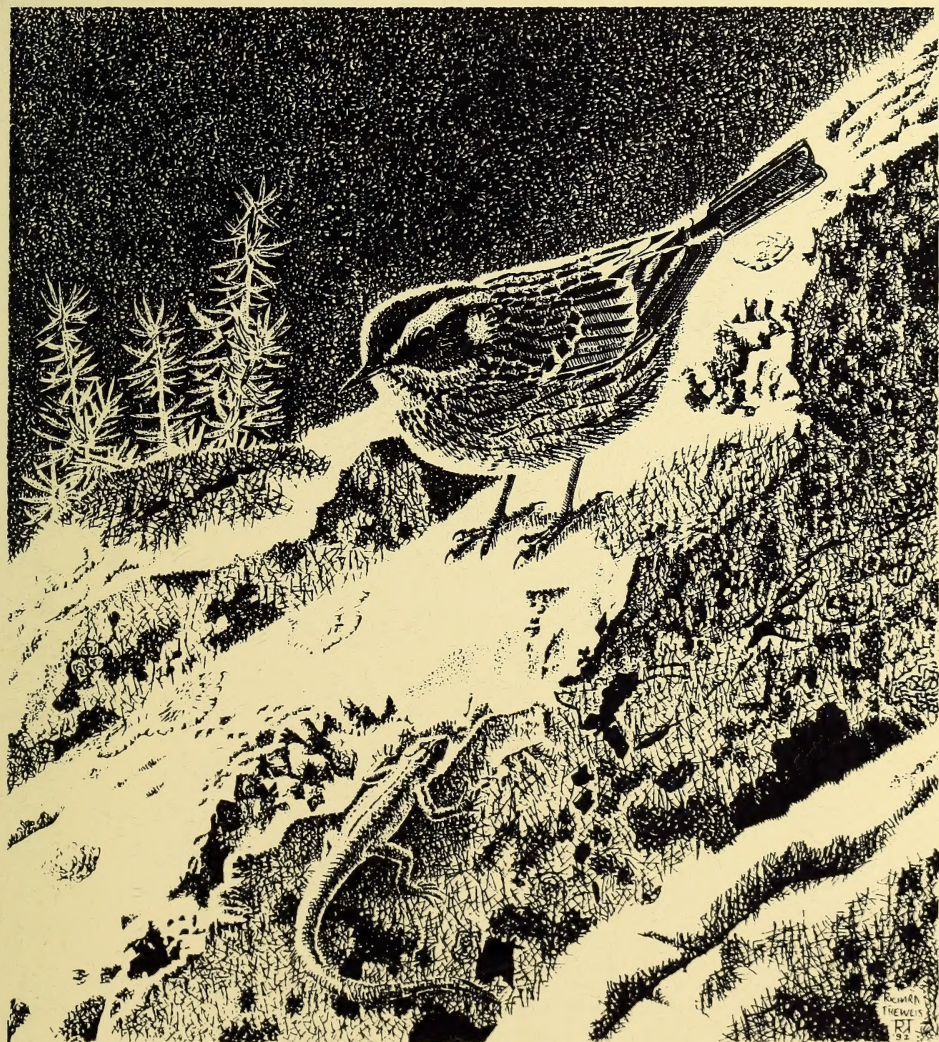


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Editor: Mark Boyd

All records in this Bulletin are subject to acceptance by the relevant records committees of the country concerned.

Any articles, announcements or requests to do with birds in the Middle East are welcome, and may be published free of charge, subject to the discretion of the Editor. Accompanying photographs and line-drawings are welcome. Bird names generally follow those of Birds of the Middle East and North Africa.

Contributions to the next Bulletin should be received by 15 February 1993. They should preferably be double-spaced and typed. Articles on disk (3.5 or 5.25 inch only please) are welcome. Please include both formatted and ASCII files *and a paper copy as well.*

Illustrations

We are grateful to the following artists for the illustrations used in this Bulletin:

SM Andrews: Houbara Bustard 2; Little Rock Thrush 4; Hoopoe 8; Yellow-vented Bulbul 10; herons 14; Barred Warbler 16; Redpoll 45.

Mark Boyd: Short-toed Eagle 32.

Richard Thewlis: Radde's Accentor (Cover).

We are grateful to the RSPB for the use of the following illustrations:

Kestrel, Darren Rees, 19; Little Owl, Mike Langman, 42; Bewick's Swan, Rob Hume 44.

Ornithological research at the National Wildlife Research Center, Taif, Saudi Arabia

Stephen F Newton

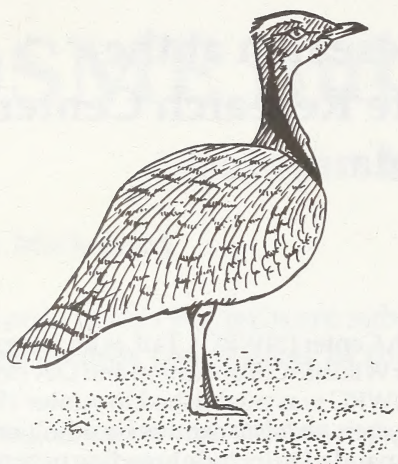
Introduction

The National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), Taif, is an integral part of the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD), based in Riyadh. NWRC was established in winter 1985/86, primarily as a Houbara *Chlamydotis undulata* captive breeding unit. The remit of the Center was soon expanded to include breeding programmes of Arabian Oryx, Ostrich, Ibex and gazelles. The current remit of NWRC remains focused on the captive breeding of these species, but the task of management of protected areas and reintroduction is now also an integral part of its programme.

The Center is situated on the interior plateau at 1400m above sea level, just inland of the northern Asir mountains, approximately 200km from Jeddah and the Red Sea coast, and 800km from Riyadh. During summer 1991, the Center was expanded considerably. A new Field Research Department was created to monitor wildlife in protected areas, to undertake pre- and post-release surveys of introduced species and to initiate and support other NCWCD projects and surveys on endangered or poorly known species and habitats outwith the protected area network in the Kingdom.

NWRC, Taif

A large breeding flock (200+ birds) of Houbara of both the North African subspecies *Chlamydotis undulata undulata* and the Asian subspecies *C u macqueenii* are maintained for research (former) and reintroduction purposes (latter). The species is notoriously difficult to breed in captivity. Only 121 chicks were reared in three breeding seasons (1989-91). After considerable research and investment in artificial insemination and artificial incubation and using the technique of egg-pulling, around 150 chicks were reared from 60 laying females in 1992. This level of production enables the breeding stock to be maintained at current levels and frees birds for reintroduction experiments. A small number of Red-necked Ostriches *Struthio camelus* is maintained at the Center and in the near future the breeding stock will be increased and a reintroduction programme will be started.



The location of NWRC was not chosen on conservation grounds - the initial area being intrinsically uninteresting, flat, overgrazed sandy semi-desert. However, the exclusion of domestic livestock has resulted in excellent recovery of the original vegetation and the site is now attractive to a wide variety of migrants and winter visitors. The breeding densities of resident species such as Black-crowned Finch Larks *Eremopterix nigriceps* are considerably greater than those recorded outside. However, in spring and summer 1991, groups of up to 15 Bald Ibises *Geronticus eremita* were regularly present in an area immediately adjacent to NWRC. The birds foraged on rather degraded desert for beetles and roosted in mature *Acacia* trees. The origin of these birds is rather puzzling, since none bore rings of breeding programmes in Israel or Turkey, and it can only be inferred that they are non-breeding subadults wandering about their former range. Unfortunately, there has been no similar recurrence to date in 1992, though up to two were seen briefly in early spring.

Harrat al-Harrah

This enormous reserve in the extreme north of the Kingdom, adjacent to the Jordan border, is protected by a large vehicle-based ranger force backed up by aerial reconnaissance. Bedu camps and their associated flocks of sheep and goats are excluded, although camels are still allowed to graze. The habitat comprises undulating black lava desert, including abundant extinct volcanic cones, cut by very shallow, though better-vegetated wadis. The site is renowned as the last stronghold of the Houbara in Saudi Arabia, with a small, resident breeding population which is augmented by overwintering birds from other breeding sites farther to the north. Sand Gazelles are still present in reasonable numbers. A long-term field research programme on the Houbara has been started in which flock size, distribution, movements, habitat use and feeding ecology will be examined. Ground and aerial surveys are

undertaken to assess population size, and future work should include some telemetry, both conventional and satellite.

Mahazat as Said

This is a large fenced desert/semi-desert reserve (c. 2200km²) on the central plateau 200km northeast of Taif. Habitats are predominantly sand and gravel plains, though in places the area now resembles African savannah, with *Acacia* and *Maerua* trees, shrubs and grasses recovering well after good rains and protection from domestic livestock. Mahazat is the focal site in Saudi for the reintroduction of native ungulates - so far both Arabian Oryx and Sand Gazelles have been re-established and are breeding successfully in the reserve. The site has also been used for some reintroduction trials with Houbara, though the habitat is not ideal and only small numbers of birds have been used. However, the successful breeding year at NWRC in spring 1992 means that more comprehensive releases and follow-up work on Houbara will be undertaken from summer 1992 onwards. The site will probably feature strongly in feasibility studies and subsequent reintroduction of Red-necked Ostriches.

Perhaps the most important bird species utilizing Mahazat is the Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*. At least 100 have been recorded roosting in the safety of the reserve, both in trees and on the ground, together with smaller numbers of Griffon *Gyps fulvus* and Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus*. They forage mostly on carrion (domestic livestock) outside the reserve. About 10 pairs of Lappets breed in the reserve; in 1992 six nests were monitored in detail, from which four chicks fledged. Eggs are laid in December and fledging does not take place until June. A postgraduate study has just begun on the feeding ecology and ranging behaviour of the scavenging bird community (including Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*). Also, a monitoring programme of the small passerine community is being established. Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*, Dunn's *Eremalauda dunni* and other typical "desert" larks breed in considerable numbers.

Wadi Turabah/Jebel Ibrahim

The wadi and jebel are situated in the northern Asir mountains approximately 100km south of NWRC. The site has no formal protection as yet, but we hope this will be achieved soon. Wadi Turabah is a fairly narrow valley approximately 55km long, with a fairly major, perennially running, water course flowing inland. Thus, a wide variety of relatively lush, well-vegetated habitats are present, including reedbeds, grassy terraces, *Acacia* woodland and palm groves. Jebel Ibrahim is an area of spectacular montane scenery, centred around a granite plateau rising to 2600m. The domes and cliffs are reminiscent of Yosemite and the intervening slopes are relatively well wooded.

The overall area supports a high proportion of the Arabian endemics. It is perhaps best known for its wetland birds, including breeding Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* and Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*, plus a wintering flock of Black Storks *Ciconia nigra*, and as the first proven breeding site for Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* in Arabia. The *Acacia* woodlands also support a healthy population of Arabian Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos dora*, which is receiving special attention by NWRC. The distribution, habitat selection and breeding status of all species is monitored regularly and a draft management plan is being developed for presentation to NCWCD and the Government for ratification.

Raydah

This is a small reserve (9km²) situated approximately 20km west of the city of Abha at the southern end of the Asir mountains. The site extends from approximately 1200-2700m on the southwest facing escarpment, and is probably the best-preserved area of montane juniper woodland in Arabia. Virtually all the terrestrial endemic bird species occur in the reserve (except the Accentor), together with other scarce species such as the Shikra *Accipiter badius*. The ornithological monitoring at this critical site is centred on gaining a much fuller understanding of distribution, movements, habitat requirements, breeding ecology and survival rates of relatively common forest species. Thus, the following are receiving particular attention: Yemen Thrush *Turdus menachensis*, Yemen Linnet *Carduelis yemenensis*, Arabian Serin *Serinus rothschildi*, Dusky Turtle Dove *Streptopelia lugens*, Palestine Sunbird *Nectarinea osea*, Little Rock Thrush *Monticola rufocinerea*, Yemen Warbler *Parisoma buryi*, Brown Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus umbrovirens* and White-breasted White-eye *Zosterops abyssinica*. Methods used include constant-effort mist-netting, colour-ringing and point counts; radio telemetry of some species is planned for the future. Recently, we have discovered a healthy population of the Mountain Nightjar *Caprimulgus poliocephalus*, a species new for Arabia. This African species is probably resident and widespread in the forests of southwestern Saudi Arabia. It may have been overlooked because it whistles rather than churrs.



Tihama

The Tihama coastal plain is well developed in Saudi Arabia between Jeddah and the Yemen border. Several species-specific NWRC projects are underway at three fairly widely separated sites. The Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs* survives very tenuously and a protected area is being established in the vicinity of Qunfudah. Given habitat protection, it is hoped that the population may partially recover by recolonisation from areas across the Red Sea where persecution is perhaps not so intense. The breeding biology and feeding ecology of the Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* is studied on some small mangrove-fringed nearshore islands near Al Lith, where approximately 35 pairs nest semi-colonially on the ground. During summer/early autumn 1992 an attempt is being made to survey most other islands in the Saudi sector of the Red Sea to estimate the overall population of this species. Within Saudi Arabia, the Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* is confined to a single wadi system in the extreme south west corner of the country. Although numbers have been monitored irregularly over the last five years and almost certainly exceed 1,000, we are only now beginning to investigate their ecology and the threats to this endangered population.

Other Surveys

Many projects could be listed in this section, but I will mention only three briefly. It has long been known that the majority of the African wintering population of the Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* probably passes through Saudi Arabia on migration. However, almost nothing is known of numbers involved, route taken and whether or not any staging posts are used. In spring 1992 a survey team visited the Hail/Jebel Aja' region in north-central Saudi to investigate crane migration. In two weeks, approximately 4,500 Demoiselle Cranes were counted. Preliminary observations indicated that they probably pass through the Kingdom rapidly without utilizing any feeding/staging posts although they do descend at dusk and roost on the ground in the vicinity of the Nafud Desert. More comprehensive coverage is planned from 1993. Casual observations suggest that substantial numbers of raptors migrate through the Kingdom. To date, only two sites have been covered systematically for reasonable lengths of time: Al Hada escarpment near Taif in autumn 1991, and Hail in spring 1992. Future monitoring of these and other sites is anticipated. Finally, recent events in the Arabian Gulf have shown how important it is to have baseline waterfowl counts from coastal areas and knowledge of seabird breeding sites. As yet, waterbird populations of the Red Sea are very poorly known and over the last couple of years NCWCD has been establishing a mid-winter survey protocol for the area as part of the Asian Waterfowl Census. From 1993, NWRC will be fully involved in this project.

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Some observations of birds in northwestern Iraq, 1983

SA Rasmussen

Introduction

During the autumn of 1983, I spent three months in Iraq working at a chemical plant, five kilometres south of the Euphrates and about 15 kilometres from the Syrian border near the village of Al Qaim. The factory and the camp site covered an area of about 25 square kilometres.

I arrived in Baghdad on 9 September, and next day I drove to Al Qaim. From 6-10 November, I visited Baghdad and surroundings and returned to Al Qaim. Finally, I left Al Qaim on 2 December.

My observations were restricted to the camp and the plant itself and an area of open land between them, crossed by roads passing a wadi. I managed two short visits to the banks of the Euphrates, which offered little habitat for bird life. I also drove three times to Huseiba at the Syrian border, and spent a week in Baghdad in the beginning of November, and from there I travelled to Babylon and Kerbala.

Because of the war, I was not allowed to bring binoculars or photographic equipment with me, and I could not explore the surroundings of the plant. Further, because of an eye ailment, I had to use sunglasses all day long.

It was obvious that most of the migration was directed towards east/southeast, i.e. towards the fertile parts of the country between the two important rivers (the Euphrates and the Tigris), whereas migration of swallows and other passerines was westward. It was also evident that many smaller birds (nightjars, wheatears, shrikes etc) were quite exhausted after having crossed maybe 200-300 kilometres of dry desert land.

Local Topography

During my stay in Baghdad and my four 450-kilometre drives from the capital to the plant, I noticed the changing landscape between western and southeastern Iraq. Iraq west of the Euphrates is an enormous flat desert covered mostly by dusty clay over limestone. The south is characterized by flat and fertile lowland and wetlands. As a result, the birds at Al Qaim in the northwestern desert were quite different from those around Baghdad and Babylon.

The camp had previously been occupied by around 7,000 people, but was nearly empty. It was about five years old, and the company had planted trees and bushes around the factory and the camp. The camp employees had also grown gardens with lawns and flowers by importing fertile earth from the banks of the Euphrates. Because of this, the camp and the plant seemed to attract migratory birds. It was less good for breeding birds. The plant itself seemed to attract migratory raptors, possibly because the heat produced by the installations created thermal updraughts.

Climate

During September, October and November, the sun shone each day from 7 o'clock in the morning to 7 o'clock in the evening. The temperature was up to 50°C during the first half of September, and cooler, like a Danish summer, until the beginning of December, when clouds began to appear. No rain fell during my stay. Winds were mostly from the south or east, occasionally from the west and rarely from the north, and were moderate.

Systematic List

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

On 11 November, at 1 pm, 25 White Storks headed southeast over the camp, and on 26 November, at 11 am I saw a flock of 36 over the plant. In both cases, the birds were clearly following the Euphrates.

Buzzard *Buteo spp*

I noted 107 observations of buzzards between 14 September and 30 November. Of these, I recorded about 24 as Long-legged Buzzards *Buteo rufinus* (seven during September, six during October, and 11 during November). The remaining 83 I noted as Steppe Buzzards *Buteo buteo vulpinus* (12 during September, 33 during October, and 38 during November).

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

I saw Black Kites daily. From the middle of October, I noticed 10 to 15 Black Kites migrating daily.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

On 19 September, I found a dead Kestrel at the factory. The dead bird had no head, and one of the wings was badly damaged. I saw Kestrels on various occasions, hunting and sitting on poles at the plant, in the camp and along the road from Baghdad to Babylon.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

From 9 September to 26 November, I observed one to three very noisy small falcons within the plant area, where they flew around resting on chimneys, towers or railings. They behaved as if they were a breeding pair with one juvenile.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

On 21 September, I was told that a dead 'chicken' had been found on the ground at the factory. I saw the bird and identified it as a Quail. On 8 October, I flushed a Quail at the plant's outdoor storage area.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

I saw big flocks of Turtle Doves over Baghdad on 10 September, in a palm-grove at the Euphrates on 23 September, and again in the Baghdad area from 7 to 9 November, but in much smaller numbers.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Very common at my arrival at Baghdad and at the camp. A month later, only a few were seen in the camp, but the species was still abundant in Baghdad in early November.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Only observed three times: one bird between Baghdad and Al Qaim on 10 September, 10-12 northeast of Baghdad on 7 November, and one near Baghdad on 9 November.

Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

On 28 September, a male and a female were found roosting at the plant.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

Between Baghdad and Babylon on 9 November, I saw about 10 birds perching on telephone wires along the road in the wetlands, and on 25 November I saw three Pied Kingfishers noisily diving in the Euphrates.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

On 23 September, I saw two Hoopoes at the Euphrates, and on 9 October one appeared in the camp.



Raven *Corvus corax*

This species was seen regularly over the camp, over the plant, at the Euphrates and also during my trips to and from Baghdad.

Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*

I saw two to three Brown-necked Ravens almost daily at the plant, and on November 30, two mobbed three Black Kites over the desert area between the plant and the camp.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

When driving from Baghdad to Al Qaim on 10 September, I observed many flocks of Rooks along the roadside. I was astonished to see so many juveniles: none of the hundreds of birds observed then – and also later at Al Qaim – had the pale spot at the root of the beak. Allouse (1953) reported Rooks as arriving in large flocks in the latter half of October and the first half of November (coming from the south or southeast). It was not until 5 November that I again saw small flocks, totalling 67 individuals, mostly juveniles, flying east-northeast over the camp.

Also during my trip to and from Baghdad and Babylon during the first week of November I observed big flocks of Rooks. The migration of Rooks (always east-northeast) continued daily in flocks around noon totalling 70-100 birds until I left the plant.

Hooded Crow *Corvus corone corvix*

Only one was seen during my stay, at the Euphrates on 25 November.

Meopotamian Carrion Crow *Corvus corone capellanus*

Observed on five occasions near Baghdad, and I also saw six between Baghdad and Babylon.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Only noticed three times, but might have been flocking with rooks, as on 16 November. Also observed at the Euphrates on 25 November and near Baghdad on 2 December.

Magpie *Pica pica*

Observed on 10 September, 6 November and 10 (totally 12 specimens) near Baghdad. Two were also seen at the Euphrates on 25 November.

Fieldfare *Turdus pularis*

On 3 November at 7 am, I saw and heard three at the fence of the plant.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

One seen and heard in the camp on 11 November.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

One seen and heard northeast of Baghdad on 7 November, and the following day in a park in Baghdad. According to Ctyroky (1987), this record may be the third for Iraq.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

This species, which breeds and winters in Iraq, was observed only once, in Baghdad on 8 November.

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*

On 31 October, one was seen sitting on the fence of the factory storage area.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

Seen at the storage area on 13 September and 13 November.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

Observed on 22 October and 11 November (four individuals) in the desert area between the camp and the plant.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

This migrant was seen 14 times from October to 14 November in the gardens of the camp.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

This species was seen 15, at the plant, at the camp and in Baghdad.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

On 18 October in the evening I heard a Robin in one of the gardens of the camp. On the morning on 1 December, one was seen on a factory windowsill.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Birds resembling this species were seen on four occasions from 26 September into October at the plant.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

At the plant and in the gardens of the camp from 19 September to 22 November I frequently observed eight to 12 Chiffchaff-like birds daily.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Observed five times between 14 September and 27 October in the camp and on the lawns at the head offices of the plant.

Pied Flycatcher *Muscicapa hypoleuca*

One female at the plant on 1 October.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

This species winters in Iraq and was observed four times: 9 September and 25 November at the Euphrates; 9 November at Babylon; and 18 November in the open area between the camp and the plant.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

A passage migrant in Iraq, the species was heard at the plant on 28 September and 16 October.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Seen frequently from 1 October to 2 December, in the camp, at the plant, on the way to Baghdad, in Babylon and in Huseiba. The numbers peaked from the end of October into November. Flocks were seen flying west on 16 November and south on 20 November.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Up to 10 were observed daily from 9 September to 11 October, on the lawns at the plant's head office building.

Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*

On 12 September I saw either a female or juvenile at the plant. On 25, 27 and 28 September and 10 October I saw males also at the plant.

Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthopygos*

On 9 September, in the garden of the guest house in Baghdad, I watched several Bulbuls with spectacular yellow undertail-coverts. On 7 October, I saw three birds in a tree in the camp. I know Common Bulbuls *Pycnonotus barbatus* from East Africa, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia very well, but the bulbuls I saw in Iraq were definitely Yellow-vented Bulbuls.



[There is a possible record of Yellow-vented Bulbul from Feluja, just east of Baghdad (*J Bombay NHS* 28: 271), but otherwise these seem to be the first records. Eds]

White-cheeked Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*

This species was also observed in the garden in Baghdad on 9 September, where a pair of these birds foraged on yellow dates, and from time to time mobbed the Yellow-vented Bulbuls. On 7 November, two pairs were seen copulating in the same garden. From 8 to 10 November, White-cheeked Bulbuls seemed rather common in Baghdad and around Babylon.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Starlings wintering in Mesopotamia were seen from early November in small flocks flying west. Small flocks were seen in Baghdad, and many flocks observed between Baghdad and Babylon also in November. On 6 November, a large flock was seen flying east from the plant, and on 25 November several flocks were seen resting at the banks of the Euphrates. On my way to Baghdad on 2 December, I observed very large flocks.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea semenowi*

At dusk on 12 October I saw a flock of about 12-15 yellowish-greyish birds in bushes at the camp. The following evening I saw five birds at the same place.

Acknowledgments

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Notes on recent changes in the status of breeding herons in the Egyptian Nile Valley and Delta

Sherif M Baha El Din

In recent years, there has been a noticeable change in the status of most of the herons breeding in the Egyptian Nile Valley and Delta. This change is probably partly due to increased ornithological coverage of various areas of this region, particularly during the summer. However, the rapidly altering ecology of the highly manipulated environment in the Egyptian Nile Valley is certainly the main cause for these changes.

Fortunately, the recent changes have been increases in numbers, expansion in range and establishment of new breeding colonies of all species known to breed in the Nile Valley and Delta. This article reviews the most notable recent observations reflecting these changes.



Locations mentioned in the text.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

There is some evidence of an increase in the abundance of this species. In recent years it has been seen more regularly, even along the smallest canals in cultivated areas. Over 100 individuals were counted from a train travelling between Qena and Aswan during the summer of 1991. Goodman and Meininger (1989) state that the species is known to breed only in the Nile Delta and northern Valley.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Three small colonies containing a total of over 150 nests were found in the summer of 1992 in marshy localities northeast of Bilbeis, eastern Delta. On 4 August 1992, the nests still contained young.

This is the first confirmed breeding of this species in Egypt since 1922, when chicks were taken from a nest found at the Giza Zoological Gardens (Goodman and Meininger 1989). These authors assessed the current status of the species in Egypt as being 'probably a rare breeding resident in the Upper Nile Valley.'

Green Heron *Butorides striatus*

This species has quietly colonised the southern half of the Egyptian Nile Valley. The first record from this region appears to be on 4 November 1982 at Aswan (Goodman and Meininger 1989). Today Green Herons are recorded regularly in suitable habitats as far north as Asiat. Although no nests have been found yet, birds of this species, including very young juveniles, have been seen year round throughout its range. There is little doubt that Green Herons breed in the Egyptian Nile Valley.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

The species was regarded as a 'rare and local breeding resident in the Upper Nile Valley' (Goodman and Meininger 1989). The only known breeding site for the species was a very small colony at Aswan.

On 18 July 1992, hundreds of Squacco Herons (probably over 1,000), including recently fledged young, were noted around Damietta at the western edge of Lake Manzala. The birds abounded in the rice fields in this agricultural landscape. No such concentrations have been reported elsewhere in Egypt, particularly during the summer. The birds must have bred in nearby reed swamps, along with Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* (see below).

In July and August 1992, a total of about 100 nests were found in three separate colonies to the northeast of Bilbeis. This is the first confirmed record of breeding of the species in the Nile Delta. The nests found contained chicks and nearly fledged young.

Cattle Egret *Egretta ibis*

There is clear evidence that the Cattle Egret's numbers are now increasing dramatically in the Nile Delta. The species suffered during the 1970s and early 1980s, probably as a result of the heavy use of pesticides (Mulli  and Meininger 1985; Mulli  et al 1992).

Pineau (1992) estimates that there has been a four-fold increase in the numbers of egrets nesting at the infamous Giza Zoo colony between 1987 and 1990 (from 1,604 nests in 1987 to 7,269 nests in 1990). In 1992, the colony must have grown even bigger because the birds extended their activity (for the first time outside the zoo boundaries) to a 'sub colony' on a group of trees shading the local police station, about 0.5 km farther

north. Similar expansions were noted at Shakshuk (Fayoum) and Suez. Furthermore, three new large colonies, containing over 5,000 nests, were discovered in the summer of 1992 northeast of Bilbeis. Cattle Egrets were also noted as far north as Mansoura, in the northern Delta, where they have been absent during the last two decades.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Considerable numbers of Little Egrets were seen in the west of Lake Manzala during the summer of 1992. No breeding evidence was found, but they appeared to be resident in the area, probably breeding in association with Squacco Herons in the large reed swamps. Furthermore, at least five nests were found containing half-grown chicks to the northeast of Bilbeis, where the birds were nesting in association with Cattle Egrets. This is the first verified breeding of the species in the Delta since at least the 1950s.

New breeding colonies in the vicinity of Bilbeis

The new colonies were first noted by Mr John Tidy, in June 1992. The colonies are about 15 km northeast of Bilbeis and include three major colonies and several smaller 'sub colonies'. They are all in *Typha* reed swamps. These are the most diverse colonies known from Egypt,

including nests of all species mentioned above (except for Green Heron), and very possibly a small breeding population of Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus*. Some Ibises were seen around one of the colonies throughout most of the summer (see details for other species above). The landscape of the area is dominated by rice fields (in the summer) and fish farms. Both of these contained many amphibians, particularly the frog *Ptychadena mascareniensis* and the newly described toad *Bufo kassasii*.



The age of these colonies, which are the largest of their kind known in the Delta, is unknown; but they are certainly a recent response to improved environmental conditions and perhaps a more abundant food supply.

Discussion

Meininger (1991) and Pineau (1992) suggest that the recent increase in Black-shouldered Kites *Elanus caeruleus* and Cattle Egrets is related to a reduction in the use of pesticides in agricultural land in Egypt. According to Dr Mohammed E Hamaki, general manager of pest Control at the Ministry of Agriculture (in Lewnes 1992), the Egyptian Government has reduced pesticide use by 40 percent over the last five years. Mullié et al (1992), on the other hand, note that the recent increases coincided with a shift in the type of pesticides used in Egypt, while Horner and Magalli (1992) propose that changes in agricultural practices might have led to this increase (in the case of the Black-shouldered Kite). There is, however, nothing but circumstantial evidence to support any of the above scenarios.

It is most likely that a combination of factors have led to the current apparent increase in some bird populations, in-depth studies relating these rapid changes with shifts in agricultural practices (including changes in pesticide use patterns) would be most useful, particularly to ensure the future conservation of these birds.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks go to Mr John Tidy for pointing out his finding of the Bilbeis colonies, and to my wife Mindy, Mr Ahmed Riad, Dr Gary Alport and Mr John Hardwick who accompanied me during various visits to Bilbeis and other sites in the Delta.

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Impressions of spring passerine migration at Aksehir Gölü, Turkey

Chris Bradshaw and Guy Kirwan

During a short survey of Aksehir Gölü, conducted between 19 and 26 April and 3 and 8 May 1992, it became apparent that the area is important for migrant passerines. This note summarises our observations.

When we arrived in the area on 19 and 20 April, there were large numbers of Lesser Short-toed Larks *Calendrella rufescens*, Whinchats *Saxicola rubetra*, Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Lesser Whitethroats *Sylvia curruca*, Blackcaps *Satricapilla*, Wood Warblers *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* and Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca*. During the following week, there were also flocks of several other species: Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, and Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*. Although we could only estimate numbers because of the wide area of habitat involved, the volume of migration was very impressive. For instance, we calculated that perhaps as many as 10,000 Whinchats, 15,000 Blackcaps and 250 Collared Flycatchers were present on some days. Smaller numbers of the following species were also regularly encountered throughout the first week of the survey period: Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (eight individuals), Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* and Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*.



The migration was different by the time of the second survey period. The number of birds had decreased, and the most common birds were now Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster*, Red-throated Pipits *Anthus cervinus*, Willow Warblers, Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* and Black-headed Buntings *Emberiza melanocephala*. Of these, only Willow Warbler had previously been recorded in significant numbers, while most of the others had been present only in very small numbers. However, smaller numbers of the birds that had made up the bulk of the passage during the earlier period were still passing through.

Akşehir Gölü, a large playa lake, linked to the nearby Eber Gölü, is at the extreme southwest edge of the Central Plateau, close to the industrial city of Afyon. The two lakes, perhaps best thought of as a single closed wetland system, are enclosed to the south by the Sultan Mountains and to the north by the Emir Mountains. The lakes, especially Akşehir, are surrounded on all but their northern shores by dense orchards, principally of almonds, interspersed with cereal fields, which predominate on the north side of the lakes. Thus, such a 'green' area, in a deep valley and otherwise surrounded for a large distance by alternately cultivated and barren steppe forms a natural resting and feeding area for passerines. Bad weather in the Sultan Mountains (snow often still falls in late spring) will further concentrate migrants into the basin around the lakes; such adverse conditions prevailed throughout the second half of April 1992.

Passerine migration has been little studied in Turkey, although casual data have been collected during two breeding bird surveys. One spring census, largely concerned with Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, was made at Eber Gölü (WIWO report 28). Mist-netting for passerines was conducted on 16 days between 3 and 22 April 1988. For anyone searching for something a little different from their holiday in Turkey, a visit to Akşehir in either spring or autumn, the latter being even poorer known, could be the answer. The possibility of seeing large numbers of migrants, some in very incongruous situations, reminiscent of a classic British east coast fall, and with the possibility of rarer migrants (we recorded River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* and Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea*) should be sufficient incentive.

Acknowledgement

We should like to thank Neil Aston for participating in the first half of this survey.

Chris Bradshaw, 112 Lonsdale Drive, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent, UK; and
Guy Kirwan, 6 Connaught Road, Norwich NR2 3BP, UK

Mixed flocks of foraging Jackdaws and Cattle Egrets

Henk K Mienis

The Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* is a rare resident in Israel, restricted to a few colonies in caves (Bet Govrin) and quarries (Migdal Zedaq near Petah Tiqwah) (Hovel, 1987; Paz, 1987). In recent years, the Jackdaw has also bred in growing numbers in the quarry of 'Nesher-Ramla' and some nearby caves.

Since May 1992, large mixed flocks of Jackdaws and Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* have been seen hunting for insects and other prey in an abandoned Avocada plantation between the quarry and the 'Nesher-Ramla' sewage-reservoir. The Jackdaws associate with the egrets among the tall weeds, often flying up briefly to chase an escaping prey item. The mixed flock moves systematically from one end of the plantation to the other. Also during brief rests in the remaining avocado trees, this mixed flock is maintained. At the end of the day, the Jackdaws return to the quarry, while the Cattle egrets move westwards to their roosting colonies somewhere west of the line Ramla-Lod.

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Zoological Museum, Dept. Evolution, systematics and Ecology, Berman Building, Hebrew University, 91904 Jerusalem, Israel

Kestrels feeding on reptiles near Ramla, Israel

Henk K Mienis

For the past three years, we have been using a number of large nestboxes on tall poles near the 'Nesher-Ramla' sewage reservoir, Ramla, Israel. Although placed initially to attract owls, so far the nestboxes have been occupied only by Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* and House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*.

In 1990 and 1991, a nestbox fixed to an electricity pole near the entrance of the reservoir was used successfully by a pair of Kestrels. In 1990, we observed their diet, directly and indirectly by looking at pellets and other debris. It comprised mainly large insects (grasshoppers, mole crickets, beetles), small birds and a considerable number of Levantine voles.



During 1991, voles were scarce and so the Kestrels changed to eating reptiles. At the end of the breeding season we found below the nestbox the remains of eight Agama lizards *Agama stellio* and eight Chameleons *Chamaele chamaeleon*. The heads and tails of both prey species had been discarded.

Other available reptiles such as juvenile snakes (*Coluber jugularis asianus* and *Natrix tessellata*), lizards (*Ophisops elegans*) and skinks (*Chalcides ocellatus* and *Mabuya vittata*) were not taken.

Although it is well-known that Kestrels occasionally take reptiles, it is unusual for them to be such a prominent part of the diet.

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The OSME Sites Register Scheme: progress report

Mike Evans

The Sites Register Scheme was launched by OSME in 1983 so that members could document important sites for birds in the Middle East (OSME Bull. 10: 1-3). Members filled in forms on sites which they felt were important and sent them in to the Co-ordinator, who carried out this role in his spare time. The Scheme was rather open-ended and archival. Its success in gathering information on a country-by-country basis depended on the distribution and level of activity of OSME members. Thus the Scheme has now largely been replaced by the ICBP/OSME Important Bird Areas in the Middle East project launched in 1991.

To 'wrap things up' in the Sites Register Scheme for the present, I report here on results of the Scheme since the last report in 1988 (OSME Bull. 21: 12-14). During this period, nine further sites were added to the register, including three which contributors wish to keep confidential. The other six sites are listed below, with the form compiler's name and using the spelling given:

Egypt

Wadi Ambagi	26°07'N 34°13'E	R Frost
-------------	-----------------	---------

Saudi Arabia

Jebel Humrah area	-	M C Jennings
-------------------	---	--------------

Turkey

Tuzla Golu	37°N 27°E	A F A Hawkins
Eregli Marshes	37°N 33°E	P Willoughby
Halfeti	37°N 37°E	P Willoughby
Deve Gecidi Baradjii	38°N 40°E	P J Dubois

In summary, 38 participants have sent in 181 site forms in the nine years of the scheme's life, and have collectively made a major contribution to bird conservation in the Middle East. These very valuable results are being fed into the Middle East IBA project (Turkey and Cyprus by ICBP). The analysis of the Sites Register Scheme data promised in the last progress report was abandoned when it became clear that coverage was too uneven between countries; however, such an analysis is planned for the Middle East IBA project results.

M I Evans, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge, CB3 0PJ, UK

Important Bird Areas in the Middle East: an update

Mike Evans

This project was launched last year by OSME and the International Council for Bird Preservation, with the aim of compiling essential information on all sites in the region which are important for bird conservation, to be published as a book in 1993. The book will be widely distributed to governments and other decision makers in the area, with the intention that it will promote further initiatives at these sites, eg activity in education, monitoring, protection and legislation. Participation by all interested individuals and organisations is most welcome and is strongly encouraged; please write to the address at the end of this article for details of the project, in English or Arabic.

Since the last progress report (*OSME Bull.* 28: 39-40), data collection has begun in earnest, with data-sheets and associated instructions having been sent out to numerous participants. A network of contacts continues to be developed to cover all countries in the region, although current events in Iraq and Afghanistan are making it difficult to find participants in those countries. Data-collection is being undertaken primarily within each country, by governmental wildlife conservation agencies, by NGOs and by individual birders.

At the end of the project, groups within each country will have all the collected national data at their disposal, and it is hoped that an impetus of interest and concern will have been reached whereby the important sites in each country will continue to be watched, the quality of information on them will continue to be upgraded, their status will be monitored, and ways will actively be sought to ensure their continued existence in the face of any threats.

My job as co-ordinator is to provide help to all participants wherever possible, eg by finding data, seeking out further contacts, putting people in touch and so on, as well as compiling data-sheets myself from the literature for any remaining areas which lack active participants, eg Iraq. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you are interested in participating; I can assure you that any contribution will be worthwhile. An example of a completed data sheet follows this article; the data-sheet is easy to fill in, and you will be contributing towards conservation at the same time.

Mike Evans, Project Co-ordinator, IBAs in the Middle East, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, UK



IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

DATA-SHEET

EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED DATASHEET

Please read the accompanying form. Please complete this form.

Please return completed form to:
M. I. Evans, ICBP

Attempting to complete this form. An example is enclosed.

Ref.: [ICBP use]

1. Country:

Republic of Yemen

2. Province:

Al Hudaydah Governorate

3. Name of site:

Wadi Rijaf, Jabal Bura
(Wadi Hudayn; Suq as Sabt)

4. Date of compilation:

27 July 1992

5. Name and address of compiler:

M I Evans, c/o ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ,
United Kingdom. Telephone: 44 223 277 318. FAX: 44 223 277 200

6. General location:

60 km east of Al Hudaydah

7. Geographical coordinates:

Centre = 14°53'N 43°26'E

8. Area: (in hectares)

Circa 250 ha (see attached map)

9. Altitude

300-1,000 m

10. Criteria used to select sites: see *Guidelines for the selection of IBAs*

Put an "X" in relevant box(es):

☐	Globally threatened species
☐	1% or more of a species' population (List 2)
☐	20,000 or more waterfowl
☒	Migratory 'bottleneck' site
☐	Top 5 site: restricted range species

☐	Top 5 site: regionally threatened species
☒	Representative bird community
☒	Rare/threatened/unique bird community
☒	Importance for education/research/tourism
☐	Other reasons (specify below)

List "Other reasons" here:

11. Ornithological importance: see Lists 1-3 in *Guidelines for the selection of IBAs*

Name of species	No. of breeding <u>pairs</u>	C o d e	No. of birds in mid-winter <u>(individuals)</u>	C o d e	No. on migration <u>(individuals)</u>	C o d e
Micronisus gabar	Max 1	2				
Accipiter badius	Max 4	3				
Buteo buteo					Daily max 200 Sep	2
Aquila nipalensis					Daily max 200 Oct	2
Aquila heliaca					Daily max 1 Nov	2
Neophron percnopterus	Max 1	2			Daily mx 70 April 25 Sep	2
Alectoris melanocephala	Minimum 5	2				
Dendrocopos dora	May breed		Min 1 Nov	3		
Oenanthe (lugens) lugentoides	Max 5	2				
Sylvia leucomelaena			Min 3 Feb	2		
Pycnonotus xanthopygos	Min 50	3	Max 240 Nov	3		
Turdoides squamiceps	Min 20	3				
Onychognathus tristramii	Min 10	2	Max 100 Nov	3		
Estrilda rufibarba			Max 20 Nov	3		
Serinus rothschildi			Max 1 Nov	3		
Carduelis yemenensis			Max 1 Nov	3		
.....						
<u>Other interesting species:</u>						
Numida meleagris			Max 40 Feb	3		
			Not seen since 1985: presum. extinct.			
An unusually large number of raptors breed (or rare presumed to breed) in the IBA (or nearby on Jabal Bura): Milvus migrans, Neophron percnopterus, Gyps fulvus, Micronisus gabar, Accipiter badius, Aquila chrysaetos, Aquila verreauxii, Hieraetus fasciatus, Falco tinnunculus, Otus senegalensis, Bubo africanus.						
Continue on separate sheet if necessary						

Additional information: At least 80 spp. have been recorded, including at least 46 spp. confirmed or presumed to breed within the 250 ha of the IBA boundary (v.diverse). The latter include many Afrotropical spp.: Wadi Rijaf represents the most intact and representative Afrotropical forest/bushland bird community remaining in Yemen. The volume of raptor migration in autumn is sure to exceed 3,000 birds. The site has been well-watched in autumn/winter, less so in spring/summer.

12. Topography / climate / hydrology / soils / geology / tides: Jabal Bura is a granite massif which rises very steeply from the Tihamah foothills to 2,200 m. Wadi Rijaf is one of two deep valleys on the mountain's west side. Rainfall guesstimate = 800 mm p.a., falling mainly July - Sept. Average annual temp. 30°C, range 15° - 40°C; humidity is high. After storms, continuously flowing water in Wadi for up to 1 month; large rock pools hold water all year round.

13. Habitats / vegetation / flora and non-bird fauna:

Brief description of habitats/vegetation/flora: The best and most intact example of Afrotropical 'Sudanian' vegetation in Yemen and perhaps Arabia; in valley bottom is riparian forest up to 20 m high, dominated by Ficus spp. and Trichelia emetica at 400 m, by Acacia abyssinica at 600 m, plus Combretum molle, Berchemia discolor, T. emetica. Thicket on slopes above forest dominated by Acacia asak. Below 400 m is shrubland of Anisotes trisulca, + Euphorbia spp. and Caralluma russelliana.

Habitats: give % cover of each

☐	Marine environment
☐	Non-marine wetlands
☐	Desert/desert fringe
☐	Grassland/steppe
65	Scrub/bushland

30	Woodland/forest
☐	Agriculture/cultivation
☐	'Artificial'
5	Other (specify): ... Bare rock
☐	Other (specify): ...

Details of non-bird fauna: (especially rare/endemic) 9 large mammals in IBA incl. Hyaena hyaena, Papio hamadryas, Ichneumia albicauda, Procavia capensis. 7 reptiles incl. a Varanus new to science (1988). At least 3 amphibian and 1 fish spp. At least 52 butterfly spp. including a Charaxes new to science (1982).

14. Threats: (give brief summary) Information up to 1986: a dirt road bulldozed through the forest in 1983/4 is an erosional scar; it has led to increased settlement, livestock ranging, cutting of vegetation for forage, collection of firewood and timber, creation of banana plantations, diversion of wadi water to irrigate these. Greatest threat in future is anticipated to be unregulated (commercial?) exploitation of forest products, i.e. fire-wood, timber, livestock forage.

Classify threats as C (Critical), M (Major) or L (Local), where relevant. Potential, rather than actual, threats should be bracketed:

☐	Over-exploitation of birds/eggs (food, pets etc.)
☐	Excessive or irresponsible hunting/falconry
☐	Deliberate persecution of birds
☐	Excessive disturbance of birds
☐	Introduction of non-indigenous fauna/flora
M(C)	Deforestation/tree-cutting
☐	Forestry/afforestation
L(M)	Diversion of water/canalization
☐	Drainage
☐	Damming
☐	Over-extraction of ground-water
☐	Irrigation
☐	Drought
☐	Fire
L	Built development/construction
☐	Dredging

☐	Land claim/landfill
☐	Extraction industry (mines, quarries etc.)
☐	Destruction of desert crust
L	Conversion to agriculture/ploughing up
☐	Agricultural intensification
☐	Abandonment of traditional management
L(M)	Over-grazing/over-browsing
L	Excessive soil erosion/degradation
☐	Oil pollution/exploration
☐	Toxic pollution
☐	Eutrophication
☐	Air pollution
☐	Debris/garbage pollution
☐	Other (specify):
☐	...
☐	...

15. Conservation measures taken: (protected areas/other measures) No aspect of the natural environment at Wadi Rijaf is legally protected. However, the Local Council of the Bura administrative district have taken steps to ban the commercial cutting of wood.

16. Conservation measures proposed: The Directorate of Forestry of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has drawn up plans for a protected forestry preserve, not yet submitted to the government for approval. The Bura Local Council has pointed out that local residents must be given access to cheap alternatives to firewood, i.e. butane gas cylinders. One Local Council member has recommended protection of trees and animals, and bans on hunting (Shu' 1989).

17. Land ownership:

The forest and surrounding bushland are owned by the local community; no more details are known at present. — Livestock appear to be free-range in the IBA.

18. Economic, cultural and social values of site: The valley provides water for human consumption and irrigation lower down on the Tihamah, timber for building, firewood, forage for livestock. There is a lack of cultivation due to the steep slopes. Local residents recognise and value the unusually intact nature of the forest. A limited amount of foreign eco-tourism occurs at present (<5 bird-tours per year) and could be carefully developed to the benefit of the local community.

Current land use(s): classify as P (Primary) or S (Secondary):

☐ S	Agriculture/cultivation
☐ P	Rangeland (livestock)
☐ S	Water supply
☐	Fisheries/aquaculture
☐ P	Forestry
☐	Hunting

☐	Urban/industrial/utility
☐ S	Tourism
☐	Recreation
☐	Wildlife conservation/research
☐	Other (specify): ...
☐	Other (specify): ...

19. References: cite key references in full.

Shu', A.M. 1989. Wahat al-majalis. In: al-Thawra Newspaper (Sana'a) 23 March.
Scholte and Evans (in prep.) The fauna of Wadi Rijaf, Jabal Bura (?Fauna of Saudi Arabia).
Larsen, T.B. 1982. Biol. Skr. Dan. Vidensk. 23(3): 1-85 [type-descrip. of *Charaxes bernstorffi*].
Wood, J.R.I. 1982. The Jabal Bura valley forest community. Unpubl. report to GTZ.

20. Relevant maps available: list map(s) covering the site.

1:50,000 = Series Y.A.R. 50. Sheet 1443A2. Edition 1-D.O.S. 1980. (attached)

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP

Please return to: M. I. Evans, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, U.K.
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News and Information

Compiled by Simon Albrecht

The aim of this section is to inform readers about events in the OSME region. It is not intended as a definitive report or write up of the projects concerned. Many of the projects are sponsored; such support is appreciated but is not generally given acknowledgement here.

New Magazine for Birdwatchers

OSME member Dominic Mitchell has launched the new *Birdwatch Magazine*. It covers a wide range of birdwatching and conservation issues with articles on bird identification, photography and shooting. While the focus is on Britain there is much to interest birders in other parts of the world including the Middle East.

The first volume contains articles by R P Morris on the Crab Plover breeding season on Abu al Abyadh island in Abu Dhabi, and an assessment of bird conservation priorities in Turkey by Richard Porter.

Individual subscription rates for a year (12 issues) are: UK £23.50; Europe and surface mail £34; Air mail (outside Europe) £75. The magazine is available from Subscription Dept, Birdwatch Magazine, PO Box 1786, London E17 7JG, UK. Enclose a sterling cheque payable to Solo Publishing Ltd.

Israel

In August, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel called for international pressure to oppose the erection of a Voice of America transmitter in the Negev Desert.

The project was initiated some two and a half years ago but was suspended at the end of 1990 by the Israel High court of Justice pending the results of environmental impact surveys. The

partial findings of these surveys underline the negative impact that the transmitter will have. The site is on the main migration route between Asia, Europe and Africa and it is feared that the transmitter, covering 8 square kilometres with twenty 160 metre high net antennae, will threaten hundreds of thousands of individual birds. In addition, it will be an intrusion into one of Israel's few remaining natural savannah landscapes.

The Israel Government has recently renewed its commitment to build the transmitter following pressure on Prime Minister Rabin from the USA. SPNI called on people to express their concern and opposition both to the US President and to Prime Minister Rabin. The matter was due to be discussed in late August by Israel's National Planning Authority.

Turkey

Kizilirmak Delta breeding bird survey

This project was postponed for a year as a result of the Gulf war, but took place between 15 March and 15 June 1992. Preliminary results show that the importance of this delta has been seriously underestimated in recent years. The delta is the last remaining coastal wetland on the Black Sea coast and of great importance to birds during the winter, migration and breeding periods.

A small breeding colony of the globally threatened Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* was discovered (cf. OSME Bull. 28:32). The area also supports extensive breeding colonies of herons and egrets as well as some 50 pairs of Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* and several breeding Cranes *Grus grus*.

During survey work, the digging of a big drainage channel along the shores of the lakes was discovered. This was part of a new Kizilirmak Delta Irrigation Scheme. DHKD intervened quickly at a high level and the digging was stopped on 25 April. DHKD also immediately initiated a hydrological survey whose preliminary report clearly shows that the planned channel would threaten the marshes and lakes. The report gives some alternatives and recommendations for further action.

Following the survey work DHKD has started the 'Kizilirmak Delta Conservation Project' with an office in Bafra, the nearest town, and a full time project officer. The project will undertake conservation action based on the final reports of the ornithological and hydrological surveys.

Seyfe Gölü

A visit by DHKD birdwatchers in June established the breeding of several species at this important wetland site. Of particular note were White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus* – the first confirmed breeding of this species in Turkey since the late 1970s – Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber*, Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei* and Marbled Ducks *Marmarsetta angustirostris*. [Information on this site up to 1984 was published in *Birds of Turkey 2 - Seyfe Gölü*, available from OSME sales].

The fieldworkers discovered that a new irrigation scheme for the area, planned

and already partially executed by DSI (the State Waterworks) included draining the biggest part of the lake: the part with the breeding bird islands. DHKD is preparing a strategy for the management of the site. Aerial photography has been carried out and this confirms the threat to the islands from the proposed irrigation scheme.

Buyuk, Menderes Delta and Bafa Gölü - Integrated Management Plan

In the last Bulletin, we reported the establishment of an Integrated Management Plan for the Menderes Delta. On 2 June, HRH the Duke of Edinburgh officially opened the DHKD Menderes Delta Nature Information Centre. The project has employed a warden to protect the Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* colony. An attractive leaflet in Turkish and English has been produced for visitors to the Nature Information Centre. There has also been lobbying for the inclusion of the area into the Dilek National Park and against illegal reclamation of the remaining marshland.

Lesser Kestrel 'nest boxes' at Eregli Marshes

Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni* under threat from increasing disturbance and predation near the Eregli Marshes, Central Anatolia, have been helped by DHKD, local authorities and voluntary groups. The Kestrels nest in heaps of stones as well as crevices in walls and buildings. People have fenced off the stones and also built a special stone wall with Lesser Kestrel crevices, modelled on similar walls in France and Spain. DHKD made a video film of the activity which was shown on Turkey's main evening news.

Ramsar Convention

During the spring, there were a number of meetings in Ankara discussing the possibility of Turkey signing the

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitats. We understand that useful progress was made. In view of Turkey's international importance for wetlands and for both breeding and wintering waterfowl we hope that we shall shortly be able to report that Turkey has signed this binding convention.

Pakistan

Haleji Lake – fishing rights challenged

Fishing is supposed to be banned under legislation at this lake, which is of international importance for waterfowl. The issuing of fishing rights in August has been challenged in the Sindh High Court by the Society for Conservation and Protection of Environment (SCOPE) and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). We await the outcome.

Houbara hunting by Dubai Sheikhs

The Houbara *Chlamydotis undulata* is an endangered species whose hunting is strictly banned in Sindh. A number of Pakistanis have been arrested, fined and punished for hunting and possessing the species. Nevertheless, last autumn the Sindh Government issued an order allotting the rulers of Dubai an area of the district of Thatta for hunting Houbara and training their falcons until 1995. This was challenged in the Sindh High Court by the Society for Conservation and Protection of Environment (SCOPE). The court suspended the government order. In March, the Sindh Government returned to the High Court because the continued suspension of the order 'may have adverse repercussions on the country's foreign policy.' Again, we await news of the outcome.

Yemen

School participates in International Garden Bird Survey

We have learnt that the Mohamed Ali

Othman School in Taiz participated in the International Garden Bird Survey organised by the RSPB's Young Ornithologists' Club. We congratulate the school on their work and look forward to hearing of more surveys carried out both in Yemen and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Slender-billed Curlew

Up to two individuals have been seen in Oman in a recent winter but the largest known wintering population is of four birds at the Merja Zerga lagoons and salt marsh on Morocco's Atlantic coast. This site is now threatened by a road to be funded by aid from the Italian Government. While the main road from Rabat to Tangier will skirt the marsh, a proposed slip road from the junction for the coastal resort of Moulay Bouselham will cross the very area of salt marsh where the Slender-billed Curlews spend the winter. The area is also internationally important for waterfowl, with over 1,000 Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* and 10,000 Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* wintering.

Letters of protest should be addressed to the Italian Government Minister of Foreign Affairs: On. Emilio Colombo, Ministro degli Affari Esteri, Farnesina, Foro Italico, Roma, Italy.

Requests for reprints on owls

Authors of articles or publications dealing with owls and wishing them to be listed in the second edition of a working Bibliography of Owls of the World are asked to send reprints to: Richard J Clark, The Owl Bibliography, c/o Department of Biology, York College of Pennsylvania, York, PA USA 17405-7199.

OSME News

Retiring Chairman

This year's AGM saw the retirement from Council of Mike Rands after nine years sterling service, first as a 'member without portfolio' and, since 1987, as Chairman of Council.

Mike's commitment to OSME and ornithology in the Middle East has been considerable. OSME's first expedition, to North Yemen (as it was then) in autumn 1985, was organised and lead by Mike (ably assisted by his wife, Gill) and the thoroughness of the research carried out resulted in many new discoveries about the endemic birds of southwest Arabia. The contacts made in 1985 have stood OSME in good stead for its forthcoming expedition to southern Yemen.

Council meetings under Mike have always been full, business-like and often with a fair degree of vision. Mike's five years as Chairman have seen OSME's membership increase from 600 to 1,000 members; been marked by the highly successful and enjoyable 10th Anniversary Event; and have seen a consistent increase in the professionalism of the Society. Perhaps Mike's greatest contribution to the long-term conservation of the region's birds was the launch of the Middle Eastern Important Bird Areas project (jointly with ICBP, IWRB and RSPB) which promises to be the reference document on areas of outstanding ornithological importance for many years to come.

Mike's good humour, and impressive list of contacts in conservation organisations throughout the world, will be missed at future Council meetings, but we know we can continue to call on his support and experience as and when necessary. In the meantime, Council (on behalf of the membership) express their sincere thanks for everything Mike has done for OSME over the last nine years and hope he will now have a little free time to actually look at some of the birds he has done so much to conserve.

At his last council meeting Council presented Mike with a Turkish kilim (purchased by DHKD) as a gesture of appreciation and thanks from Council for his contribution as Chairman.

Geoff Welch

Thank you

I was sorry to miss the last AGM held under my chairmanship, particularly since I was unable to thank Council, the Vice Presidents, DHKD and others for the magnificent gifts given to me and my wife, Gill, at my last Council meeting. I am very grateful to Lord Barber, who kindly stepped in to chair the AGM.

Chairing Council for the last five years has been most exciting and rewarding. OSME is going from strength to strength, thanks to a growing and dedicated

membership, increasing participation from ornithologists throughout the Middle East and a dynamic, hard-working Council. I have greatly enjoyed playing a small part in developing the Society and it has been a special pleasure to work alongside such a good-humoured and committed group of individuals.

Your new Chairman, Geoff Welch, will help to strengthen, broaden and develop OSME in many beneficial ways. He has been a tower of strength, serving as joint-secretary and librarian with great skill and dedication. His quiet, authoritative manner and knowledge of Middle Eastern birds and conservation issues will be of enormous value to the Society.

Michael Rands

Forthcoming OSME meetings

The fifteenth and sixteenth OSME AGMs will be held on 17 July 1993 and 9 July 1994 respectively. OSME is also planning another joint meeting in the Netherlands in May 1993, and a further joint meeting with Birding World at Cley, Norfolk on 2 May 1993. Further details and locations will be announced in Bulletin 30.

OSME situations vacant

Would you like to contribute to the work of OSME? In July 1993, the roles of Treasurer, Publicity Officer and Membership Secretary fall vacant. Useful attributes for all these jobs are – a sense of humour, a commitment to OSME and plenty of spare time!

The Treasurer: is required to provide accurate information on finances for the day-to-day running of the Society and to ensure that Council's ideas are not beyond the Society's means. Experience of accountancy would be an advantage. Please contact the current Treasurer, Major David Counsell, for further information (tel 0892 529110 or write c/o OSME). The post runs from July 1993 for five years.

The Publicity Officer: organises events, deals with advertising, and devises other promotional schemes. If you feel OSME could be promoted better and would like to see more activities for members then this is the one for you - OSME is what you make it! Contact Mark Andrews (tel 0533 834875 or write c/o OSME) for details. The post runs from July 1993 for five years.

The Membership Secretary: organises mailings, membership renewals, and deals with membership enquiries. Must be able to operate membership database on own computer. Contact Chris Tucker (tel: 0234 742333 or write c/o OSME) for details.

These jobs must be filled at next year's AGM. If you would like to help with running OSME in other ways, please contact the Chairman, Geoff Welch (tel 072 873 298 or write c/o OSME) for details of other roles for which volunteers are required.

OSME's Bankers

Lloyds Bank has move the processing of the OSME accounts from the Sandy branch to Biggleswade and allotted new account numbers as follows:

The current account is now 0942610 vice 0110271

The deposit account is now 7422469 vice 7028430

All standing orders should be made into the former and credit transfers into the latter account. The sort code for Biggleswade branch is 30-90-79.

The Treasurer will amend the current standing order forms as he receives them before forwarding them to the relevant bank.

Photographs for Sandgrouse

If you can lend good photographs of any of the following for possible publication in forthcoming *Sandgrouse* papers, please send details, or the photos themselves, as soon as possible, to the Editor: Duncan Brooks, c/o British Museum (Natural History), Akeman St, Tring, Herts HP23 6AP, UK (tel: 081-520 3943 home; 0442-890125 office). Photos will be welcome in any format, though good quality black-and-white prints or colour slides (originals, not copies) are best; all will be returned. All material will be well cared for, though no responsibility can be taken for loss or damage.

Houbara *Chlamydotis undulata*

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria*

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura*

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, adults

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*, dark morph from basalt of Jordan/Syria

Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus*

Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus*

OSME and Sunbird in Egypt, April 1992

OSME's first joint venture with Sunbird was a perfect example of why the Middle East is attracting more and more visiting birdwatchers. As well as the birdwatching, the collaboration helped swell OSME's Conservation Research Fund. Co-leader of the trip, Mike Everett, explains.

This year's Egypt trip was a delight: a group of seven, plus two leaders, made for very comfortable birding. Sherif and Mindy Baha el Din joined us for the excursions around Cairo, and thanks to them we saw a lot which we might otherwise have missed.

We began with some good desert birdwatching near Suez. The Bryan Bland Masterclass on lark identification was much appreciated here, and Short-toed *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Desert *Ammomanes deserti* and Bar-tailed Desert Larks *Ammomanes cincturus* all did us proud. At the coast south of Suez, we hit a good

spell of northward raptor passage, dominated by Steppe Buzzards *Buteo buteo vulpinus* but with good numbers of Steppe Eagles *Aquila nipalensis*, a score of Short-toed Eagles *Circetus gallicus*, a few Imperials *Aquila heliaca* and assorted others (including 26 Cranes *Grus grus*, honorary raptors in such situations) keeping us on our toes. The intertidal mud at Suez is almost non-existent now, with so much land-claim going on, but the wader pools just inland were ample compensation. Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus* and a Broad-billed *Limicola falcinellus* among the Little Stints *Calidris minuta* and Purple Gallinules *Porphyrio porphyrio* picked their way through the rubbish beside the degraded remnants of a reedbed.



The Aswan area was perhaps a little disappointing, but the Abu Simbel trip produced distant views of 20 or so African Skimmers *Rynchops flavirostris* on their nesting island and - in the desert - stunning views of two Lappet-faced Vultures *Torgos tracheliotus* grounded close to the road. This leg of the tour, like the next at Luxor, included a goodly slice of Ancient Egypt. This dual-interest approach by Sunbird is proving highly successful. Admittedly, it is not difficult to get hooked on Egyptian temples and tombs; even the most single-minded birder is guaranteed to succumb. There were birds too, of course. Our best session was a couple of hours alongside a reed-fringed inlet at Crocodile Island. Here, we had marvellous views of two Little Crakes *Porzana parva*, numerous Little Bitterns *Ixobrychus minutus*, a pair of Rufous Bush Robins *Cercotrichas galactotes* and the inevitable Little Green Bee-eaters *Merops orientalis*.

Since my last visit to the Red Sea coast near Hurghada two years ago, a lot of holiday development has started up. Some of the attractiveness may have gone from the area, but there will eventually be much more cover for migrant birds. The Red Sea boat trip turned up the anticipated Sooty Gulls *Larus hemprichii*, White-cheeked Terns *Sterna repressa*, Swift Terns *Sterna bergii*, Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster* and Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*; along the coast, White-eyed Gulls *Larus leucophthalmus* were almost the commonest species. A good selection of migrants included Quails *Coturnix coturnix* (with some amazingly good views) and large numbers of Red-throated Pipits *Anthus cervinus*. At one point, a single tiny bush held a Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*, a Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, a Lesser Whitethroat *S curruca*, a Subalpine Warbler *S cantillans* and a Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*.

A severe sandstorm blighted our visit to Wadi Natrun, but, not without some discomfort, we managed to find a few Kittlitz's Plovers *Charadrius pecuarius*.

Gebel Asfar was hard work, having deteriorated (in bird habitat terms at least) since 1990, with fewer good wet bits, but we did well for Senegal Thick-knees *Burhinus senegalensis* here (having somehow missed them elsewhere). We could hardly miss Egypt's only White-breasted Kingfishers *Halcyon smyrnensis* here, and at one point were almost surrounded by Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters *Merops superciliosus*. Sadly, only a few of our group glimpsed our one and only Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*.

Assorted small events and chance encounters go to make up a good trip: one of our Americans found a Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* sitting in the desert; we bumped into RSPB warden and fellow OSME member Andrew Grieve at Suez; and we spent the day of the UK general election in a small boat in the Red Sea. The one I remember most was the expression on Sherif's face when we saw an Osprey over Gebel Asfar - it was a new species for that locality.



Reviews

Bahrain Wader Study 1991 By Erik Hirschfeld, Saeed Mohamed and Tadeusz Stawarczyk. WIWO report 42. 30pp. Available from WIWO, c/o Dutch Society for the Protection of Birds, Drieburgseweg 16C, 3708 JB Zeist, the Netherlands. DFL10, including postage. Add DFL 15 if paying in a foreign currency.

The Bahrain Wader Study 1991 aimed to collect data to help define the region of origin of waders passing through Bahrain, investigate their feeding efficiency, the turnover of migrants, local movements and oil pollution. This study took place over the period 12 September to 8 October 1991 and involved the trapping of birds for ringing and marking, as well as high-tide counts. The trapping activities produced claimed first records for Bahrain of Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* and Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*.

Altogether, 456 waders of nine species were ringed. These were mostly Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea*, Dunlins *Calidris alpina* and Little Stints *Calidris minuta*. There were 22 retraps and 177 resightings at other parts of the island. High-tide counts were made at five sites with a maximum count of 6,590 waders at a single site on 23 September. The lowest site count was 428 on 7 October.

This report is complete with numerous tables and figures providing information on the birds trapped. There is also a checklist of all the birds observed during the study.

MC Jennings

**Reiseführer Natur Türkei by Aygün and Max Kasperek,
published by BLV Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990. 239 pages, col. &
b&w ill. s, maps. ISBN 3 405 14030 7**

This book, together with one on Australia, is the first of a new series of Nature Travel Guides. It is beautifully illustrated with 165 colour and 61 black-and-white photos.

A 12-page introduction treats Turkey in seven different regions, and highlights the nature of the country's rich fauna and flora, transitional between the Near East and Europe, but also including Asian and African elements. There are, for example, 9,000 plant species, of which an astonishing 3,000 are endemic. The genus *Verbascum* (the mulleins) has 228 species in Turkey, 180 of them found nowhere else! Mammals are represented by 125 species, reptiles by 91 (only seven of which also occur in central Europe), and there are about 240 species of regular breeding birds. The introduction also tells us about the geology, climate, people and land-use, which have shaped the landscape and its wildlife.

The bulk of the book comprises specific guides to good sites. A total of 31 main sites are described in detail, with brief notes on a further 31. The main site guides vary from four to seven pages, with lesser sites given just under a page each. Each main locality is described; then characteristic plants and animals are noted, and other nearby areas of interest listed. Finally, we are given practical hints on, for example, how to get there, and where to stay and eat. In addition to the enticing illustrations, every main site is mapped. These maps appear to be good, though some are perhaps too general to be useful in the field.

The authors concentrate on Turkish specialities, though rarities are not included, unless they can be seen without danger of disturbance. Scientific names are not used in the text, but there is a complete list of all German common names used, together with their scientific names at the end of the book, and an index in German. Thus, even with a rudimentary command of German, the book is usable, and the excellent photos can of course be enjoyed by anyone.

Finally, there is an eight-page section on planning a trip to Turkey, ranging from things to do before going (visas, health, money), to travel and survival in the country.

This is a nature guide in the broadest sense. For example, site 8, Pamukkale, is of geological interest, famous for its calcium deposits and hot springs. The places covered are well distributed throughout Turkey, from the Bosphorus in the northwest to Nemrut volcano in the southeast. Turkey is a very large country, and consequently a number of sites much visited by birders, such as Cizre, are not in here. But as a general introduction to a fascinating country and its natural wealth, it will prove most useful in planning a trip, provided you can read a little German.

Ian Dawson

Zoology in the Middle East, Volume 6. 1992. Edited by Ragnar Kinzelbach and Max Kasperek. Heidelberg. DM27.

This volume contains 12 papers, but only three on birds, all of them in English.

'Notes on some summer birds of Syria', by Wolfgang Baumgart and Max Kasperek will interest all those who visit its rather ornithologically better known next-door neighbour. While the bulk of the observations were made during a sea-turtle survey, even such apparently restricting circumstances allowed time for some significant discoveries. Chief among these is that a relict population of Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotis* may persist in the Syrian deserts.

'On the movements of the Greater Flamingo, *Phoenicopterus ruber*, in Iran' provides an interesting counterpoint to the situation in Turkey. Behrouz Behrouzi-Rad rather over-simplifies the breeding status in Turkey, but his short analysis of the post-breeding wanderings of Iranian birds may have direct parallels for Turkey. Two birds ringed in Western Europe were recently observed at Seyfe Gölü, on Turkey's Central Plateau.

'On the biometry of birds ringed in Turkey' by Eyckerman, Louette and Becuwe presents data collected as long ago as 1973. The paper includes details of the trapping of the first Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*, the record's first appearance in English.

Guy Kirwan



Around the Region

Records in *Around the Region* are published for interest only, and their inclusion does not imply acceptance by the records committee of the relevant country. To submit records for *Bulletin 30*, covering September 1992 to March 1993, please write to: *Around the Region*, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK.

Compiled by Guy Kirwan

Records refer to single individuals seen in 1993, unless otherwise stated.

Bahrain

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* Juvenile
Hamalah farm, 14 February. First record for Bahrain. E Hirschfeld

Common Crane *Grus grus* Hamalah farm, 1 May. Rare migrant. E Hirschfeld

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*
Small influx, 5 March: five Qurayyah and seven Hamalah farm. Three

Hamalah farm, 11 March. Scarce, but annual, migrant. E Hirschfeld

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*
Male, 2-4 February. Records of males distinctly unusual (cf United Arab Emirates). E Hirschfeld, R Morris

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*
ASRY, 5 March. Sixth record, most

recent in December 1989 (cf Bull 24: 37). *E Hirschfeld*

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura* Janabiyah reeds, 1-8 May, followed last autumn's influx. *E Hirschfeld*

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula alexandrinus* Now spread around Manama and Muharra in single birds, seems to be establishing itself.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* Hamalah farm, 31 January. Winter records very rare. *E Hirschfeld, I and J Andrews*

Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* Probably bred again at Riffa. *E Hirschfeld*

Little Swift *Apus affinis* Jasra, 29 March. Fourth record. *Julie McCarthy*

Small Skylark *Alauda gulgula* Wintering birds last seen in March. *E Hirschfeld*

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaseelandiae* Wintering birds last recorded in March. *E Hirschfeld*

Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* ShU 37, early April. Unusually late, also United Arab Emirates. *E Hirschfeld*

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispaniolensis* Influx during March. Normally a scarce migrant through eastern Arabia. *E Hirschfeld*

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* The bird mentioned in the previous report was last seen at Hamalah farm 11 February. *E Hirschfeld, R King, R Barrett*

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* Male among Dead Sea Sparrows *P moabiticus* Hamalah farm 4-18 February. First record for Bahrain. *E Hirschfeld, R Morris*

Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus* The wintering flocks totalled at least 245 individuals and birds were last seen 17 March. *E Hirschfeld, R Morris, I and J Andrew et al*

Egypt

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens*. Regularly recorded mid April to early July at least, maximum 13, Abu Simbel, 14 April. Uncommon

but apparently regular visitor to this part of Upper Egypt. *A Brown et al*
Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* Aswan High Dam, 11 April. Rare in Upper Egypt. *A Brown*

Yellow-billed stork *Mycteria ibis* Regularly recorded mid-April-early July at least, mac 31, Abu Simbel, 1 July. Uncommon but regular visitor to this area. *I Delgado et al*

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* Pair, 10km west of Qusaima, 25 April. Rare breeder in Sinai (Goodman and Meininger 1989). *S and M Baha el Din*.

Crane *Grus grus* 1725 in four hours, Ain Sukhna, 20 March. Unusually high numbers for Red Sea coast. *S and M Baha el Din, J Tidy*

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolicus* Hurghada, 17 April. *A Brown*. Lake Qarun, 7 May. *S and M Baha el Din, B Smith*. Uncommon passage migrant, especially away from Red Sea coast.

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* Sharm el Sheikh, 13 March Uncommon passage migrant. *S and M Baha el Din, J Tidy*.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Suez, 2 April. Rare passage migrant (Goodman and Meininger 1989) *S and M Baha el Din, J Tidy*

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* Wadi Natrun, 6 April. Scarce passage migrant, perhaps overlooked. *A Brown*

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Two, Suez, 2 April. Rare passage migrant (Goodman and Meininger 1989) *S and M Baha el Din, J Tidy*

Armenian Gull *Larus argentatus armenicus* At least 20, Great Bitter Lake, 5 April. Two to five previous records (several lacking documentation), but regular in Israel in winter. (Goodman and Meininger 1989, Hoogendoorn 1991). *S and M Baha el din, J Tidy*

Saunders' Little Tern *Sterna saundersi* Two, Ras Mohammed, 10 May. Perhaps only vagrant in Egypt (Goodman and Meininger 1989). *S and M Baha el Din, B Smith*.

African Collared Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea* Ten, Abu Simbel, late January; one, Abu Simbel, May 17. G

Armstrong, S and M Baha el Din, B Smith Third and fourth records away from Gebel Elba region (cf Brit. Birds 84:7)

Hume's Tawny Owl *Strix butleri* Two heard, Santa Katherina Monastery, 5 April. Pair, Wadi Firan, 5 April. First confirmed records for Egypt since 1986. *S and M Baha el Din, J Tidy*

White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* Two pairs, Rafah, 26 April. Status unclear in Sinai, breeds at Gebel Asfar, Cairo (cf Baha el Din 1990). *S and M Baha el Din*

Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni* Presumed breeding. Six males displaying, 45 km south of El Arish, April 27. Fourth record, and second instance of presumed breeding (cf. Baha el Din 1990, BB 84:9, BB85:454). *S and M Baha el Din*

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* Recorded displaying, Wadi El Arish, 27 April. Further evidence of regular breeding (cf BB 84:9) *S and M Baha el Din*

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Hurghada, 18 March. Rare passage migrant (Goodman and Meininger 1989). *S and M Baha el Din, J Tidy*

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp* Abu Simbel, 13 April. Rare visitor, all

records from recent years have been in spring. A *Brown*

Cyprus Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe cypriaca* Two, Abu Simbel, 23 January. Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant. G *Armstrong*

Redwing *Turdus iliacus* Gebel Asfar, 15 January. Scarce winter visitor. G *Armstrong*

Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*. Near Ras el Naqab, Sinai, 8 April. *S and M Baha el Din, J Tidy*. One Qusaima, 25 April. *S and M Baha el Din*. Forth and fifth records for Egypt, all have been in Sinai, first was in 1990

Arabian Babbler *Turdoides squamiceps* Eight, near Ras el Naqab, Sinai, 8 April. first record since 1982. *S and M Baha el Din, J Tidy*

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*. Six, Suez, 20 March. Rare winter visitor. *S and M Baha el Din, J Tidy*

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla* Sud Rawafah, 25 April. Sixth record, fifth was in 1990 (cf BB85:461) *S and M Baha el Din*

House Bunting *Emberiza striolata* Santa Katherina Monastery 21 March. Uncommon in Egypt. *S and M Baha el Din, J Tidy*

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* Male, Wadi El Arish, 25 April. Rare passage migrant, mostly to Sinai. *S and M Baha el Din*



Iran

All records: DA Scott

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* Three, Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, 26 January 1992.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* Three, Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, 25 January 1992.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* A single flock of 15,000 coming off a roost on Gorgan Bay, Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, at dawn, 26 January 1992.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus* A total of at least 237, Anzali Mordab, 23 January 1992. This count is comparable with counts in the same area in the 1970s, when the total wintering population of this threatened species in the southwest Caspian was estimated at 700-1,000 birds.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* Flocks totalling 355 in Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, 25 January 1992.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* An unusually large concentration of 445 in Kamjan Marshes west of Lake Bakhtegan/Lake Tashk, Fars, 29 January 1992. Also 190, Lake Parishan, Fars, 31 January 1992.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* Two adults at the west end of Lake Tashk, Fars, 29 January 1992. A rare straggler to the wetlands of Fars. (Numbers in the South Caspian were exceptionally high in January 1992; eg 345 at Selke Wildlife Refuge, Gilan, on 23 January).

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* A party of 11 at Fereydun Kenar, Mazandara, 24 January 1992. The flock of 4,000-6,000 which wintered in the southeast Caspian in the early 1970s had disappeared by the end of the 1970, and the species is now rare in Iran.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* Three, Gorgan Bay, Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, on 25 January 1992. There have been very few records of

this species in the southeast Caspian since the 1970s.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* At least 23, Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, 25 January 1993, and 15 at Lake Bakhtegan/Lake Tashk, Fars, 29 January 1992. These counts are scarcely any lower than comparable counts in the early 1970s, when an estimated 200-250 White-tailed Eagles wintered in Iran.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* Male and female at Lake Bakhtegan/Lake Tashk, 29 January 1992. Scarce this far south in Iran.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio* At least 90 in the extensive reed-beds at Lake Parishan near Kazerun, Fars, 30/31 January 1992. This species had not been recorded in the wetlands of Fars prior to 1980. According to ornithologists at the Iran Department of Environment, the species colonized the area in the 1980s, presumably from the wetlands of Khuzestan near the Iraqi border to the west.

Siberian Crane *Grus leucogeranus* Two adults were located during a very brief evening visit to the regular wintering area near Fereydun Kenar, 24 January 1992. According to B. Behrouzi Rad and colleagues of the Department of Environment, 11 individuals were present, including two immatures. Thus the alarming rumours that four or five cranes had been shot or captured for zoos in early 1991 are clearly erroneous, as nine of the 10 birds present in the winter of 1990/91 could still be accounted for in the winter of 1991/92.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* 52, Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, 25 January 1992. A scarce but regular winter visitor to the southeast Caspian.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyrtus minimus* Dasht-e Arjan near Shiraz, Fars, 30 January 1992, and one at Lake Parishan, Fars, 31 January 1992. A scarce winter visitor this far south in Iran.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* Unusually large flocks of 5,000, Fereydun Kenar, Mazandaran, on 24 January 1992, and 4,400, Kamjan Marshes west of Lake Bakhtegan/Lake Tashk, Fars, 29 January 1992.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* Two on Lake Tashk, Fars, 29 January 1992. although this species sometimes occurs in huge numbers at Lake Tashk and lake Bakhtegan during the migration seasons, this is the first winter record in central Fars, and indeed the first winter record inland in Iran.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas* Two near Lake Parishan, Fars, 31 January 1992, A very scarce winter visitor this far south in Iran.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* A pair on a stony hillside by Lake Bakhtegan, Fars, 29 January 1993. Scarce this far west in Iran.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* In a garden in Zabol, Seistan/Baluchiustan, on 21 January 1992. A new species for Iran - long expected.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* In woodland near Bandar Anzali, Gilan, 23 C 1992. This constitutes only the second wintering record of this species in the south Caspian region.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* Two in woodland near Bandar Anzali, Gilan, 23 January 1992. A scarce and irregular winter visitor to northern Iran.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Two in reedbeds at Lake Parishan, Fars, 31 January 1992. A scarce winter visitor this far south in Iran.

Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta* Many hundreds of birds in large flocks, moving west in the morning and east again in the evening, at Lake Bakhtegan/Lake Tashk, Fars, 29 January 1992. The weather was unusually severe at the time, with heavy snow falls in the preceding days and deep snow cover around the lakes. This was apparently the first time that the area had been under snow for many decades.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* In a garden in Zabol, Seistan/Baluchistan, 21 January 1992. The first record of this species in southern Iran, although it is regular in winter in the Tehran area and at oasis towns in the northern deserts.

Israel

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*. From pelagic trip from Eilat, June (exact date unavailable). First record for Israel (cf Hollom et al 1988). *H Shiri hai*

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*. From pelagic trip from Eilat, June (exact date unavailable). Second record for Israel. *H Shiri hai*

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* Eight breeding pairs this year in the Golan Heights. cf. 11 breeding pairs in 1991. 22 nestlings were ringed. *B Shai/IWRG*.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* Six, Elrom fish ponds, Golan, March mid April. Scarce passage and winter visitor. *B Shai*

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotis* Sede Boquer, central Negev, throughout April. Scarce away from Yotvata, Arava valley. *B Shai*

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes* Total of 22,000, Arava Valley, 20-30 April. Above average spring passage (cf BB 85: 141-186). *B Shai*

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* Two adults, Moon Valley, Eilat, 2 April at least; perhaps one of the same, Mt Yoash, 31 March - 3 April. Several recent records most recently in October to November 1991 (cf. Birding World 4:383). *Bryan Bland/Sunbird, S Pfützke*.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* Pair, with three young, En-Yhar dam, Arava, April. First breeding record for Israel. *B Shai*

Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* En-Yhar dam, northern Arava, 23 April. occasional winter visitor, a late date. *B Shai*

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* Yotvata, mid March. Scarce winter visitor to western Neger. H. Shirihi

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* Near Tel Aviv, 6 November 1991. Seven previous records for Western Palaearctic, one in Israel, in October 1985 (cf BB85: 426-428). per S. Votie

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*. From pelagic from Eilat, June (exact date unavailable). Second record for Israel (cf recent record in Egypt BB85:452) H. Shirihi

White-eyed Gull *Larus leucoptalmus* Four, Eilat, 3 May; two Eilat, 6 May. Rarer in spring than autumn (cf high numbers October/November 91 Birding World 4:383). W. van der Waal, R.Sjouken, G.ran Duin

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* Eilat, June (exact date unavailable). Second record for Israel. H. Shirihi

Swift Tern *Sterna bergii* Subadult, Eilat, 19 April; adult, Eilat, 2 May

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris* three breeding pairs were found. B Shai/IWRG

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* Ein Yahav dam in the northern Arava of israel. B Shai/IWRG

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* Bred in Kinnrot Valley (northern Israel), five pairs were found (April - July 1992). First breeding records for 52 years B Shai/IWRG

Little Tern *Hirundo albifrons* 230 pairs were bred in the Central Coastal Plain. B Shai/IWRG

Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei*. One, Eilat, early March. Scarce winter visitor. H Shirihi

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*. Three, Eilat, mid-late march. At least one other winter record (cf Birding World 2:71). H Shirihi

Black Bush Robin *Cercotrichas podobe*. One, near Eilat, April - 1 May at least. Approximately 22nd record (cf Birding



Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*, Eilat, Israel, March 1992. One of up to 18 in the area. (Photograph Mark Boyd)



Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*, Eilat, Israel, March 1992. One of up to five in the area. (Photograph Mark Boyd)

World : 357-8; Bull 25 : 44). *W. van der Waal, B Scheps et al*

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* Late record. Trapped, Eilat, 20 November 1991. Third record, previous two, also trapped, were in October 1990 (BB 84 : 233-4). *H Shirihai*

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* Late record. Trapped, Sede Boquer, 7 October 1991. Second record for Israel and Middle East. *H Shirihai*

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* Late record. Hazeva 24-25 November 1991. The first record for Israel and Middle East *per S. Votier*

Jordan

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* Loose flock of 50+ off beach at Aqaba, 20 June 1992. Unusually high numbers, first record was only in 1989 (BB 83 : 222). *DA Scott*

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* At least two with Cory's shearwaters off

beach at Aqaba, 20 June 1992. Second record, first was in 1991 (cf BB 85: 6).

DA Scott

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* A loose party of six large all-dark shearwaters off the beach at Aqaba on the evening of 19 June 1992 were probably of this species. The birds eventually flew off south down the Gulf. Potentially third record for Western palearctic. *DA Scott*

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxi* A pair of adults displaying and an immature over the cliffs at Wadi Rum on 19 June 1992 (cf breeding record Bull 25 : 44). *DA Scott*

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Five at fishponds at Azraq Oasis, 4 June 1992. *DA Scott*

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarina* Immature with other skuas off beach at Aqaba, 20 June 1992. *DA Scott*

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* A loose flock of 75 off the beach at Aqaba, 19 June 1992, and at least 20 there the

next day. Unusually large numbers.
DA Scott

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* Adult patrolling backwards and forwards off the beach at Aqaba for much of the morning of 20 June 1992. First record was in 1981 (BB 85 : 9). *DA Scott*

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* Agitated male in low, thorny, roadside scrub on the top of the escarpment 20 km north of Petra, 17 June 1992. *DA Scott*

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* At least eight in oak/pistachio woodland in Zubiya Wildlife Reserve north of Jarash, 29 November 1991. According to Hollom et al (1988), Birds of the Middle East and North Africa, there are few records in the Levant. *DA Scott*

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* At least two in reed-beds at Azraq Oasis, 27 November and 2 December 1991. *DA Scott*

Syrian Serin *Serinus syriacus* At least 20 in woodland near the top of the escarpment in Dana Wildlife Reserve (near Al Quadisiya), 28 November 1991; and at least four in bushy areas on the top of the escarpment above the reserve, 17 June 1992. *DA Scott*

Kuwait

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*. Female in summer plumage, off Shuwakh. First record for the Gulf. *A Ross*

Oman

Red-bested Merganser *Mergus serrator* Female, Sawadi, 10 January. Second record. *MAL Cummins*

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* Sun Farms, Sohar, 24 January. First record. *MAL Cummins*

Shikra *Accipiter badius* Adult female, 21 June-10 July; adult male, 4 September - 17 October; 30 October - 1 November. All Masirah. First to third records. *J Bryan, CM Greaves*

Great Stone Plover *Esacus recurvirostris* Daghmar, 13-14 February. Second record. *MAL Cummins, H and J Eriksen, G Horton*

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* Up to three adults and three immatures, Masirah, 18 July - 2 August. Third record. *J Bryan, CM Greaves*

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* In non-breeding plumage, Masirah, 24-25 September; and another there, 27 September-3 October. Fourth and fifth records. *J Bryan, CM Greaves*

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Dauka, 7-8 May. *JS Ash, G Nikolaus*

Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea* Pair, Dauka, 30 April. *JS Ash, G Nikolaus*

Little Owl *Athene noctua* Masirah, 28-30 October 1991. First record for Masirah. *J Bryan, CM Greaves*



Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* 53 on the rocks at Mirbat, 19 May. *JS Ash, MD Gallagher, G Nikolaus*

Little Swift *Apus affinis* Khawr Taqah, 21 November 1991. Seventh record. *WF Simpson*

Roller *Coracias garrulus* 204, Sun Farms, Salalah, 27 April. *JS Ash, G Nikolaus*

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* Bait Al Falaj, 11 May 1991; Masirah, 28 September 1991. MAL Cummins, CM Greaves

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* Bait Al Falaj, 14 September 1991. MAL Cummins

Saudi Arabia

Great crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Two adults in summer plumage, in the sea off Al Khobar 15 March. G Ramsay
Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* Two, at Ta'if, throughout March; one into April. There are several records in south-west Arabia since 1984, the most recent in April 1991 (cf Birding World 4: 161) leading to continued surmise that there may be undiscovered colon(ies) in this region. P Symens

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadornis ferruginea* Male, Al-Farah Dam, Yanbu al-Nakl, 14 February. First in Yanbu area since 1986. B S Meadows

Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax* at a rubbish dump, Al Khobar, from November 1991 to April. G Ramsay

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* Total of at least 4,000, t/a'il, Central Province, 19-31 March. P Symens

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* 300, near Riyadh, March. Unusually heavy passage (cf first and second spring records in UAE in 1992). P Symens

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura* Two pairs bred in Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* colony, Al Khobar. Three young fully fledged by 13 June. G Ramsay

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* About 30 pairs bred. Al Khobar, young seen from 1 May. G Ramsay

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* Jubay, 21-24 August. P Symens

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* Three, Hadeira, 16 April. Second record for this locality. First was three years ago. B S Meadows

Spotted Sandgrouse *Pterocles*

senegallus Male, Rabigh, 8 May. First recent record from this area. B S Meadows

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* About 2,000, Yanbu al-Bahr airport, attracted to recently well-vegetated area following heavy winter rainfall, 21-24 March; about 1,750 Yanbu al-Bahr barley store, 24 March. Largest flocks at Yanbu since recording started in 1979. B S Meadows

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* Singles at two sites about 100 km north of Medina along disused Hejaz railway, 17 April. Possible breeding area. B S Meadows

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Al Khobar, 8 April. G Ramsay

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Adult male, Al Khobar, 25 March with Yellow Wagtail *M. flava feldegg*, Al Khobar. G Ramsay

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* At least two pairs bred, Yanbu al-Bahr salt-pans, fledging up to six young, June-August. The salt-pans ceased to be used two years ago. The water is brackish and is overgrown with reeds, but there are numerous patches of open water. First evidence of breeding in Western Arabia. B S Meadows. Eight pairs bred, Al Khobar, young fledged from 18 June. G Ramsay

Shining Sunbird *Nectarinia habessinica* Two males and a female, along Bader-Mediwah highway, 13 March; male there, 16 April. Significant northerly range extension. B S Meadows

Pygmy Sunbird *Anthreptes platurus* Two to three, Bir al Furaysh, 70 km southwest of Medina, 17 April. New locality for north of Tropic of Cancer. B S Meadows

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* Pair reared three young, Yanbu al-Sinaiyah. Second definite breeding record. B S Meadows

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* Juvenile, Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, 24 July - 6 August. Early migrant. B S Meadows

Turkey

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* Dead individuals, Kizilirmak Delta, 19 March, 22 March. Only five previous records (Kasperek 1990). WIWO/OSME/DHKD

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritis* In summer plumage, Kizilirmak Delta, 20 April. Very rare winter visitor, last recorded in 1972 in Thrace. WIWO/OSME/DHKD

Dalmatian pelican *Pelecanus crispus* A total of 629 recorded at seven sites between 15 January - 2 February. DHKD/L Dijkzen. Six pairs breeding, Kizilirmak Delta. DHKD/WIWO/OSME

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Colony, with 55 young, Seyfe Gölü 18 June. First confirmed nesting in Turkey for at least a decade. A Johnson, G Magnin, M Yazar

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus* Five, Burdur Gölü, 26 January; five, Süleymanhaci Gölü, 22 January. Second and third records (Kasperek 1990). S. Demircan, G. Magnin, A. Sezer, M Yazar

winter visitor recorded in unprecedented numbers.

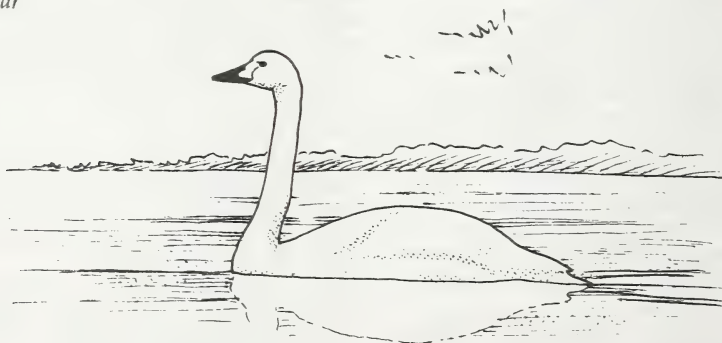
Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* Seven, Kizilirmak Delta, 29 December 1991. S Demircan et al.; three, Göksu Delta, 31 January. V.v.d. Berk, O.Görgün, K. Linders, W Özsesmi; also four shot in Menderes Delta in December/January per S Baris. Rare winter visitor.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* 5,249, total from 18 sites between 15 January and 2 February. Usually counted in hundreds in winter. DHKD

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* Female, Bendimahi, 25 June. There are a number of other recent records in summer from this locality (Turkey Bird Report in prep). M Cocker/Nature trek

White-headed duck *Oxyura leucocephala* 4,478 at nine wetlands during mid-winter waterfowl count. A low total. DHKD; Maximum 1246, Kizilirmak Delta, 23 March. Highest ever count here. DHKD/OSME/WIWO

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* A total of 200 migrating north, Kizilirmak Delta, 21



Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* A total of 133 recorded at nine sites between 15 January - 2 February. Unusually large numbers. DHKD

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis* Seyfe Gölü, 20 January. D Demircan, G Magnin, A Sezer, M Yazar; two, Menderes Delta, 26 January, 61, Marmara Gölü, 30 January. J-U Heins, G Sarigül et al. Very rare

April - 25 May. Previously unrecorded on migration in such high numbers. DHKD/OSME/WIWO

Comcrake *Crex crex* Middle East Technical University, Ankara, 30 April. Scarce passage migrant. G Kirwan, U. Özsesmi

Little bustard *Tetrax tetrax* Two females, near Burhanli, southwest of

Ankara, 8 May. Tenth record since 1966 (cf Bull 28 : 58). *G Kirwan*

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* One, Kizilirmak Delta, 25-30 April. Scarce passage migrant (Kasperek in press). *DHKD/OSME/WIWO*

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura*. Displaying, Berecik, 18 May. First record in Turkey since 1988 (Kasperek in press). *G Kirwan*

Knot *Calidris canutus* Eight, Akyatan Gölü, 24 - 25 January. *V.v.d. Berk, O Görgörün, K Linders, V Özesmi*; four, Kizilirmak Delta, 20 March. *S Baris et al.* Very rare passage migrant, former is second winter record (cf Bull 28 : 58, Kasperek 1990). Correction record last reported (Bull 28 : 58) correct date should be 8 September 1981.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* Kizilirmak Delta, 6 October 1991; another, 9 April. Scarce passage migrant, first records for the locality. *S Baris, G Kirwan*

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudis*. One mile south of Myia, 24 May 1992. Fourth record for Turkey, third in spring. *R Pahlplatz*

Little Gull *Larus minutus* Maximum 10,000, Kizilirmak Delta, end of March. Highest ever numbers in Turkey. *WIWO/DHKD/OSME*

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* Four to five, Kizilirmak Delta, 103 February; three, 22 March. Very scarce in Turkey. *S Baris, L. Dijkzen, K.v Dijken, K.v. Dijken*

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* Adult, Külü Gölü, 27 April. Fifth record (cf Bull 28 : 58). *G Kirwan*

Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* Range extension. Between 20-50 pairs now nesting in Samsun, outnumbering Collared doves *S. decaocto*. *Samsun Bird Group*

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* Total of eight or nine, Kizilirmak Delta, 20 March - 29 April. Unprecedented passage numbers. About 15 previous records. *WIWO/OSME/DHKD*

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

Kizilirmak Delta, 13 April. first or second record. *WIWO/OSME/DHKD*
Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* Kizilirmak Delta, 1 May. About sixth record (cf Bull 28 : 18-19). *WIWO/OSME/DHKD*

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Singing, Kizilirmak Delta, 29 April. fourth record (cf Bull 28 : 58). *WIWO/OSME/DHKD*

Krüper's Nuthatch *Sitta Krueperi* Kizilirmak Delta, 29 April. Unusual locality. *WIWO/OSME/DHKD*

Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* 25, Kizilirmak Delta, 26 March. Very rare in Turkey. *E. Koopman, R Lerjinck*



Mongolian Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes mongolicus* Six, Dogubayazit 25-26 June. Fourth record for Turkey and the West Palearctic; 2-4 near Igdir, 6 August. All previous records are also from this area of Turkey. *M. Cocker/Naturetrek, J Hombuckle*; 12, same locality, 3 July. *R Hotland*. At least two other records from July 1992 remain unreported *per R Webb*

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* Three, Birecik, 17 May. Several recent records from south-east and east (cf Krieger 1988). *G Kirwan*

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* One, Kizilirmak Delta, 26 April. first verifiable record (cf Hollom et al 1988) *WIWO/OSME/DHKD*

United Arab Emirates

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Nest with four young found near the reeds at the fish farm, Dubai 9 August. First UAE breeding record.*

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Two, Sharjah, 19 June. Uncommon in summer C Richardson

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii* Six were still at Khor Kalba 1 April.*

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* Soaring over gravel plain north of Al Ain 6 April, only spring record.*

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* One at the fish farm, Dubai 8-18 March was noteworthy.*

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* Ramtha tip, Sharjah, mid June to mid September, possibly a genuine vagrant and a 3rd UAE record.*

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* Ten, of race *negevensis*, north of Al Ain, 20 February. Largest ever flock in UAE. MC Jennings, C Richardson

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* Male, Al Habab, 27 July. First ever July record of adult male. C Richardson

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* A rare migrant, one was at the fish farm 14 March - 9 April.*

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* 10 were hunting together north of Al Ain on 6 April.*

Merlin *Falco columbarius* Male, Al Ain, 18 February - 9 March. Third record (cf Bull 26 : 63). R P Morris

Chukar *Alectoris chukar* A pair with two young were seen 1,000m above Wadi Bih (Musandam) on 19 June.*

Little Crane *Porzana parva* Dubai, 10-19 March. C Richardson One, Dubai fish-farm, 19-21 April. C Richardson Second and third records (cf Bull 26:64).

Corncrake *Crex crex* Das Island, 29 April.*

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* 365, Umm al Quwain, 24 January. Unusually high numbers. C Richardson

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius*

cursor 31, of which 70% juveniles, Dubai Creek, 23 May. Largest ever flock and first breeding record for Dubai area. C Richardson

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* Ten, Quwain, 28 February. R P Morris. Al Wathba, 28 March A J Morris. First and second spring records. Annual in autumn in recent years.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* Three, Ras al Khaimah, 24 January. Third record, last was in 1986. C Richardson

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* 60, Umm al Quwain, 30-31 March. Third record, last was in 1990, cf recent records in Bahrain (Hirschfeld 1991) and eastern Saudi Arabia (Bull 28 : 57). C Richardson

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* 570, Dubai Creek, 25 January. Highest ever winter count. C Richardson

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura* Four, Emirates Golf Club, 4-24 January later 13 mid February. Fourth record (cf recent records in Bahrain, bull 28 : 52). C Richardson

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* Eight, Dubai Creek Golf Course, 1-30 June at least. Uncommon over summer. C Richardson

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Three, Sharjah, mid-June. Seven, Dubai, late June at least. Uncommon in summer. C Richardson

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis* Six Abu al Abyadh, 9 February. First substantiated record. R P Morris.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* Two were reported at the Emirates golf course on 22 August. First UAE record.*

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* Young noted with adults 17 May, in area of Dubai where seen daily since 1991. This species already may be a regular feral breeder in the UAE.*

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* At least two calling on highland plateau above



Small Skylark *Alauda gulgula*, Abual Abyadh, February 1992 (Photograph R P Morris)

Wadi Bih on 20 March (also heard calling in February), indicating breeding activity, a first for Arabia.*

Scops Owl *Otus scops* Mushrif Park, Dubai on 6 April.*

Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei* Two, heard, Wadi Bih, 1 March - 1 May. Scarce, status uncertain, no confirmed breeding records, cf recent records in Bahrain (Bull 28:52) R P Morris, C Richardson

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* Abu al Abyadh, 23 March. Late record of an uncommon winter visitor. R P Morris.

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* In a Dubai garden, 30 April-3 May.*

White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* Ramtha tip in Sharjah from 28 August, still present mid September. Second UAE record.*

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* Dubai, mid March. Fourth record. C Richardson

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* Mating seen in May, with young in late July at Al Habab 50km south-east of Dubai. UAE's third confirmed breeding site.*

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha*

bimaculata Abu al Abyadh, 30 March. Very rare passage migrant, first March record. (Richardson 1990). R P Morris.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* Seven, singing, Ras Ghanadah, 3 February - early April. Again raises possibility of breeding R P Morris

Small Skylark *Alauda gulgula* Two Abual Abyadh, 18-24 February. Three, al Wathba, 18 March. First substantiated record. R P Morris

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* Three remained at Al Habab, near Dubai until 7 April and one was on Das island on 19 April.*

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* In song on plateau above Wadi Bih (Musandam). 20 March. Extension of known breeding range.*

Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*. Eight, Bida Zayed, 11 March. Three, Abual Abyadh, 31 March. Scarce passage migrant, recent records in Saudi Arabia (Bull 26:57). R P Morris.

Black Bush Robin *Cercotrichas podobe* Male, Emirates Golf Club, 15-19 April. First record for UAE and southern Gulf region. C Richardson

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*
In a Dubai garden, 23 April, only spring record.*

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* Five, Ras Ghanadah, 27 March - 1 April. Dubai, 5-6 May. Uncommon passage migrant. C Richardson

Eastern Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*.
One returned to its known wintering site at Qarn Nazwa, 3 September. Several sites in Northern Emirates occupied from 11 September. (Favoured habitat is stony-gravel plains with Acacia, adjacent to rocky foothills.*

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens* Three, Jebel Dhanra, 10 February. Scarce winter visitor. R P Morris.

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* Four males, Jebel Hafeet, 15 March. Status unclear, few other records of birds holding territory. R P Morris

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* Near Dubai, 16 January. Scarce and irregular winter visitor, last significant influx was in 1990 (cf Bull 26:65). C Richardson

Hume's Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca althaea* Ras Ghanadah, 27 March. Fifth record since being treated as separate in 1985 (cf Bull 26:65). P J Morris, R P Morris. Singles at the fish farm 21 and 23 March.*

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* Heard in song in reeds at Dubai's fish farm from early March, with young found 13 June and 5 August, suggesting two broods fledged. A first breeding record for UAE.*

Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida* 12 (noteworthy numbers) were counted on a gravel plain north of Al Ain on 6 April.*

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* Possibly of race *humei*, Jebel Ali village. Very scarce visitor, most recent in April 1991 (Bull 27:47). R P Morris. Das Island 5-16 April.*

Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus* Seven, Wadi Bih, 6 March. Scarce winter visitor and perhaps pas-

sage migrant, recently recorded in Bahrain (Bull 28:53) R P Morris.

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* Two, then four, Baheer Wood, 26-28 March; one, Ras Ghanada, 27 March.; three, Jebel Ali, 30 March. Uncommon passage migrant R P Morris. 12 in Dubai area, 25 March-11 April, indicates good passage.*

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* 46 counted in a field near Ras al Khaimah on 1 May, and nesting suspected nearby.*

Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus*. Up to four remained on Das Island until 3 April (from 21 January), coinciding with influx in other parts of Gulf area. First UAE record.*

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* Eight, Wadi Bih, 1 March. Status unclear, this record comes from a potential breeding area. R P Morris; two, Jebel Faiyah on 4 April.*

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* Dubai Golf Course, 22 May, another 6 June. Second and third recent spring records (cf Bull 27:47). C Richardson *

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* Of race *semenowi*, Dubai, 9 April. Eighth UAE record.*

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* Das Island, 15 June. Fifth UAE record.*

*Observers: Colin Richardson, John Bannon, Len Reaney, Mike Wood, Simon Aspinall, Roy Green, Adrian Chapman, Annika Forsten, Tapani Numminen

I should like to thank the following for their assistance in producing this review; S Baris/Samsun Bird Group, Arnoud van den Berg (Dutch Birding), Steve Gantlett (Birding World), Gernant Magnin, Rob Morris and Derek A Scott. Guy Kirwan

Ornithological Society of the Middle East

c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK

The Ornithological Society of the Middle East was formed in April 1978 as a successor to the Ornithological Society of Turkey. Its aims are as follows:

To collect, collate and publish ornithological data on the birds of the Middle East.

To encourage an interest in and conservation of birds of the Middle East.

To develop a mutually beneficial working relationship with all environmental and conservation bodies and natural history societies in and concerned with the Middle East.

Membership is open to all and spans over 40 countries. Membership subscriptions are: £10 individual, £15 family; airmail supplement £1.50 Europe, £3 rest of the world. Life membership £200.

Publications *Sandgrouse* is the Society's journal and contains scientific papers on all aspects of the ornithology of the Middle East. The *OSME Bulletin*, issued twice yearly to all members, covers all aspects of birdwatching and conservation within the Middle East.

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